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## TWO RECENT BOOKS ON LEE\*

In the new-found feeling of fraternity generated by the Revolution, Patrick Henry proclaimed in the Continental Congress, "There are no more Virginians, no more Pennsylvanians, but only Americans," and his words have been repeated ever since, repeated by some as if they were the carefully weighed decision of an historian, and not the eloquence of an impassioned pleader praying for the harmony which he declared had already come. The day will never come when sectionalism in the United States will entirely disappear, and this in spite of almost daily notices in the press that such and such an event marks the complete disappearance of sectionalism. In a republic so huge as ours, the divergence of local interests will to the end remain great enough to cause different views of national policy and history, so that the cry, "No North, no South, no East, no West!" is only the expression of an ideal, a negative ideal at that, and is not now nor ever will be the statement of historical fact.

But the day of the frank acceptance of purely sectional standards is passing, and no clearer evidence of this could be offered than the picture of Lee presented in Gamaliel Bradford's *Lee the American*, and Thomas Nelson Page's *Robert E. Lee: Man and Soldier*, written, the one by a New Englander born and bred, a descendant of generations of Puritans, the other by a Virginian of Virginians, the son of one of Lee's soldiers, and himself the author of the stories which have, more than any other literature, fixed in the minds of the whole country the type of the romantic ante-bellum South.

The two books differ widely in style and purpose, but it cannot be said that they differ in degree of admiration for Lee. The Southern birth of the one writer, and the Northern birth of the other do not give the key-note, and the Massachusetts

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\* *Robert E. Lee: Man and Soldier*, by Thomas Nelson Page. With Portrait and Maps. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1911. \$2.50 net.)

*Lee the American*, by Gamaliel Bradford, Jr. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1912. \$2.50 net.)

Yankee writes of his hero with as much reverence and enthusiasm as the author of "Marse Chan" and "Meh Lady."

Mr. Page's book is the outcome of an intended revision of his earlier work, *Robert E. Lee, the Southerner*, which it incorporates largely, with the addition of detailed discussion of Lee's campaigns and a chapter on his relation to the Confederate Government as regards military policy. The earlier book contained nineteen chapters, making two hundred and ninety-two pages, with two appendices and no maps. The book as it now stands contains twenty-eight chapters, making six hundred and ninety-one pages, with five appendices and nine maps. But while a short character-study has thus been expanded to the proportions of a military biography, the animating purpose of the author has remained the same, as indeed, to a great extent has the language. That purpose is to protest against the tendency which the author found appearing in certain quarters, to rank General Lee, as a soldier, among those captains who failed. Furthermore, Lee's character is again presented as the consummate type of the civilization of ante-bellum Virginia, wholly within whose borders his rearing lay. The earlier book was accordingly argumentative in purpose and frankly Southern in its point of view, and to this shorter work, the language of which is in many instances retained without change, the detailed accounts of campaigns have been attached, sometimes indeed so hastily that the joints are almost visible. As the two books are on quite different scales this makes repetition unavoidable. Thus, in the added military chapters the outline or summary of a campaign is often given in the words of the earlier book, and followed by a detailed narrative of the same events. This method certainly offers the advantage claimed for it in the introduction, of appealing to both the laity and the expert, but that hardly compensates for the resulting danger of confusion to the uninformed reader.

The chief defect of the book is just this divided nature—it is at one time a plea and a military study, a sketch of Lee's character and career, and a history of the war in Virginia, at once minute and incomplete, because only military questions are considered. The whole book lacks what has been called totality of effect.

Thus, on page 149, Chapter VII, the sentence on page 98 of the earlier book—"It is no part of the plan of this book to discuss in detail Lee's consummate tactics; but a bare outline of his far-seeing plan is necessary", is preserved verbatim except for the substitution of "clear" for "bare". But instead of the six pages of outline of Lee's attack on McClellan before Richmond, there follow in the new book forty pages of detailed description, minute enough to include the mention of specific brigades, and on the Confederate side even regiments, by name. And this fullness of detail is required by the very purpose of the new book, which, as expressed in the preface, was written not only "to give a clear outline of Lee's military career", but also with the hope that it "may prove sufficiently complete to enable the interested reader to follow intelligently the masterly campaigns on which Lee's fame as a soldier is founded."

An instance of rather remarkable oversight is Mr. Page's interpretation on page 318 of the Chambersburg General Order 72 of June 27, which he paraphrases as admonishing the soldiers "to respect non-combatants and private property, and remember *that the inhabitants were their fellow citizens*" (the italics are my own). This would have been a remarkable injunction in a Confederate general, inasmuch as the war was conducted by the Confederates throughout in the view that the citizens of the United States were not fellow countrymen, but invading enemies. As the reader afterwards sees in the General Order 72, which is given in full in Chapter XXIV, page 632, General Lee, in accordance with his invariable custom, considers the two armies to be those of two separate countries mentioning in three distinct instances "the country of the enemy and our own", "the course of the enemy in our own country", "the wrongs of our people and the atrocities of our enemy." We have General Grant's own testimony that during the negotiations at the Surrender he was struck with the way General Lee habitually thought and spoke of the Confederacy and the United States as two different countries. The slip is accordingly worth correcting, because it slightly obscures one of Lee's most signal traits—his clear-headed consistency and willingness to accept and act on facts, the same quality which

made him see after the war that a new era had brought new duties and new responsibilities, so that he wrote, "Abandon these local animosities, and make your sons Americans."

As a military study the book presents comparatively few new features. The maps are not particularly good. There is no map of the immediate field of Gettysburg, and the account of the defence of the South Anna is not as clear as might be desired. One very valuable chapter is that on Lee and the Confederate Government, which shows better than any other account known to the writer just how Lee was hampered by the civil authorities in conducting the war. The difficulties are shown to have been due equally to wrong theories of the needs of the time, and lack of efficiency in the personnel of the government. All but professed students of the war will be surprised to learn of the little actual authority wielded by General Lee, the blunders of the Confederate commissary, the tragical effects of a defensive policy of warfare, the unfortunate results of endless legislation and debate where action was needed, the equally unfortunate result of the policy of holding on to Richmond. The only omission chargeable to Mr. Page here is due to lack of space—he could not go further and explain, what he acknowledges, that the difficulties of the Confederacy were inherent in its nature and circumstances. It is that which invests the story of the conduct of the war on the Southern side with such absorbing interest—not its sadness merely, or nobility, but its tragedy. Histories that lay the blame on the obstinacy of Davis, the well-meaning inefficiency of this or that official, the failure to hold Vicksburg or to win at Gettysburg, all miss the point. The Confederacy was self-defeating, by nature, as soon as it was forced into war. As William Garrott Brown has put it in a nutshell, a protest against the tendency of the Union to become a nation could not body itself forth into a compact and hardy nationality, and such a compact nation is demanded by the exigencies of modern war. In spite of the protests of the champions of local self-government, the Confederate power made inroads right and left upon the sovereignty of the component states, which, however, in turn nearly succeeded at times in paralyzing the central authority. No government of mutually jealous states

could ever have properly supported Lee or any other general. That President Davis succeeded in upholding Lee's hands as long as he did, was much. A community of agricultural states connected by the common drawback of a large negro population employed perforce under an outworn labor system, but a community still prevailingly individualistic, the Southern States had been undergoing separation from the Union for decades before the war of heart became one of heart and hand. In the midst of a century marked everywhere by consolidation, the peculiarity of the South's racial and labor conditions—in a word, slavery—drove her irresistibly to protest against the process. Then the same forces which had brought on secession revealed themselves as incurable weaknesses, and she was crushed. Not King Œdipus even can surpass such a tragedy for completeness. Everywhere it is recognized now that it was not the armies, but the navy of the Union, that did the work, and a navy is the product of urban life and an industrial civilization. With the power afforded by its farms alone, the South could neither break the blockade nor contrive a sound new system of taxation and finance and introduce a new industrial order. In short, the seceded South, in many respects a region still in the eighteenth century, found itself instantly plunged into a war in which its foe had every advantage of the nineteenth. In patriotism, energy, and military ability, the Confederates were much superior to the American Colonies in 1779, yet their notable exertion of power during the conflict only produced the greater prostration after their defeat. Never till time ceases will the future be overcome by the past. It is this that constitutes the stigma on the barbarous methods of war sanctioned and practised by Sherman, Sheridan, Wilson, and to a less degree by Grant. In reverting to the military methods of the past, they showed a moral sense as primitive as the economics of the slaveholders.

The value of Mr. Page's book is, however, clear in spite of slight inaccuracies and verbal blemishes, and the defect of its plan. Its great virtue is its moderation and effort to be strictly just to both sides. In his accounts of battles and discussion of strategy he is true to his expressed intention to write history and

not rhetoric. All fair-minded men will agree with him that the South has suffered because it has allowed orators to usurp the place of historians. And no Southerner can refuse him his gratitude for undertaking to contribute his part to the delineation of the greatest man the South produced in the nineteenth century. Certainly no civilized country, at least, can expect to be forgiven for not writing its own history, whether others write it or not. This merit of single-hearted desire to arrive at truth in his investigations, Mr. Page must always be credited with, and that reward will remain even though his fear lest Lee should be unjustly relegated by future generations to the second class of captains seems with each passing year less and less well-founded. And without doubt his own exposition of the difficulties that confronted the Virginian Hannibal will intensify the very appreciation which he feared was still long deferred, and which another book of somewhat different title, published at the same time, has proved to be an accomplished fact.

Indeed, in view of Mr. Charles Francis Adams's "Lee at Appomattox" and "Shall Cromwell Have a Statue?" it is somewhat remarkable that Mr. Page should have felt such apprehensions. Those essays sounded the clearest note of national recognition, followed as they soon were by the expressions that greeted in 1907 the Centennial Anniversary of Lee's birth. Mr. Gamaliel Bradford in his book gives Mr. Adams the credit for having "done more than any other to help Lee to the national fame which is his due", and the praise is just. But though Mr. Adams has the extraordinary distinction of becoming the herald of Lee's fame as a national hero, after having served for years as an officer of the army Lee fought against, yet Mr. Gamaliel Bradford's accomplishment is equally great, for in his *Lee the American* we have a complete portrait from the national point of view. Some will disagree with his presentation, all must acknowledge the picture exquisitely drawn. Lee's very ashes are beneficent, for Mr. Bradford has written for himself fame as an essayist-biographer, a *psychographer*, to use his own term, while adding his voice to those who number Lee among the great and good men of history. How quickly the world moves nowadays! In 1866 Charles Sumner handed Lee over to the

"avenging pen of history", and in 1912 another typical citizen of Massachusetts writes a book on Lee, which ranks him with Washington and Lincoln.

Gamaliel Bradford's book takes its key-note from its title. It would almost seem that it was evoked by Mr. Page's earlier *Robert E. Lee, the Southerner*. Its endeavor is to secure Lee to the whole of America, as one of its most inspiring heroes, and to this end, to study him anew from a different attitude from those heretofore adopted. Mr. Bradford came late, as he tells us, to his admiration of Lee, and then felt he must bring others to see the tender and mighty soul whom he had seen and loved. But Puritan and devoted New Englander that he proudly acknowledges himself to be, the cause of the Confederacy, the history of the war from the Confederate side, touch only his brain, not his affections, and accordingly he can separate Lee from his surroundings, as far as such a thing is possible for a man, and concentrate his study on the soul of the hero.

This is the unique charm of the book. He feels and makes the reader—even, I should suppose, the most indifferent Northern reader—feel that Lee was greater than any mere soldier or conqueror or empire-builder, be he never so great a Napoleon, so that the light of his life will shine in history brighter and brighter, when war shall have been relegated to the same class of national insanity as the Inquisition and the delusion of witchcraft.

Absolved, then, from the necessity of following the order of time in his psychography, or portraiture of a soul, he divides his study into topics, bearing only a slight reference to the chronology. Four of the most interesting chapters are "The Great Decision", "Lee and Davis", Lee and the Confederate Government" and "Lee and Jackson".

In discussing Lee's decision to resign from the United States service, it is interesting to see how simply and calmly a fair-minded investigator, from the vantage ground of half a century, acknowledges the double nature of the allegiance of an officer of the old army. Most striking of all, he declares that under like circumstances of secession in the future, his own allegiance



would be first to his state and section. So far from adopting the tone of the last generation in New England, he does not even use the word "traitor" or "treason" in discussing Lee's action, but treats the whole question in the spirit of broad, calm justice bred of real historical insight. The same rare ability to acknowledge facts which Lee himself was marked by, Mr. Bradford seems to have absorbed from his subject, for he consistently uses the words "loyalty" and "country", "nationality" and "patriotism" in referring to Lee's relations to the Confederacy.

General Lee's relations with President Davis and with Jackson are intimately connected with the question which hovers in the background of Bradford's work, as of every other that treats the War between the States. Why was the Confederacy unsuccessful, and how far was it in Lee's or Davis's power to have changed the result by a different policy? Mr. Bradford believes Lee thought the result could have been different if the whole population had been willing to make sufficient sacrifices. With the advantage of aftersight, we know to-day that the operation of the blockade on the almost purely agricultural Confederacy was so paralyzing that no military efforts that did not unfasten the grip of the Federal navy could change the result. Both Page and Bradford, the former in detail and with great cogency, point out the limitations, both to Lee's plans and the execution of them, which were imposed by his subjection to the dictation of the civil government. But as Lee felt, no one clearer, the Confederacy was a constitutional government, and subordination of the military to the civil power has always been an axiom of English and American constitutional freedom. While the public of the Confederacy, or a large portion of it, under the all-compelling pressure of war, would have welcomed a military dictatorship, Lee would take no step that was not ordered by the authorities whom it was his duty to obey. Bradford doubts if Jackson would have been so scrupulous if the same possibility had lain before him—at least, whether any obstacle but Lee and his devotion to him could have stood between Jackson and a military revolution in the Confederacy. For my own part I do not believe that Jack-

son was any the less a complete servant of law and duty than Lee himself. But Bradford truly says that one of the commander-in-chief's most splendid evidences of mastery over men was his possession of the equal affection and confidence of Jefferson Davis and Stonewall Jackson.

Here, as in every other regard, Bradford reserves to Lee the unmistakable first place, pointing out everywhere the supreme influence he wielded, as the man whom his people loved with abiding constancy. Yet this attitude of the author is not the cause but the result of his study. Equally everywhere he endeavors to ascertain what was the truth, and he has no patience with the class of writers who have applied to Lee the same coat of cold and clammy stucco they have long since agreed in using to change Washington from a man to a classicistic statue. Not in the slightest degree captious, he insists that Lee is most unfairly treated by the admirers who depict him after the model of Parson Weem's Washington, as gifted with superhuman abilities and excellencies in all departments of human activity, from dress to epistolary style. This exaggeration, in essence the same provincialism from which all untrained patriotism suffers, it is his constant and successful effort to avoid, and from the point of view of his New England birth he points out several interesting particulars of what he thinks were Lee's limitations, for, being thoroughly and magnificently a man, limitations he must have had. Thus in Lee's manner to men of less strict habit of life he notices a certain tendency to preach. Probable enough in a deeply religious man over fifty, with grown sons to whom he was counsellor, friend, and mentor. He finds the same didactic tone in his familiar letters to his wife. But Lee was a kingly soul, occupied with the desperate defence of a sinking nation, and to expect the charming lightness of Stevenson in his letters would be incongruous. Most interesting of these criticisms is the judgment that Lee did not possess, or at least did not give any evidence of possessing, any sensibility to æsthetic pleasure. Certainly he does not appear to have been a bookish man in essence, any more than Washington was. In this respect they were both typical Virginians, that is, men of action. As for music, and the representative arts of painting

and sculpture, they were rare, imported luxuries, in Virginia at least, and it was almost impossible that a soldier who had spent most of his life on outpost duty should concern himself with them. Appreciation of one element of beauty, however, he seems to have possessed to a greater degree than Bradford supposes. Virginia is plentifully supplied with beautiful landscapes, and whoever has visited Mount Vernon, Arlington, and Monticello has seen three examples of Virginia plantation-houses commanding noble views. Lee wrote from Mexico of the beauty of Orizaba, kept the scarlet blossoms of the *Noche Triste* flowers before him on his table as he wrote, and is known, after the war, to have climbed the Peaks of Otter and "sat a long time on a great rock gazing down on the glorious prospect beneath, and seeming very sad." And during 1861 he had written of the beauty of the mountains of West Virginia, where he was serving. It is true that he writes of these topics always in measured, quiet language, more in the taste of the eighteenth than the twentieth century.

And after all, these small points do not prevent Bradford's judgment from being essentially correct when he sums up Lee's character by saying it was in its bent "absolutely moral and practical." Is not that sufficient indication of his greatness, if Matthew Arnold was right in assigning three fourths of life to *conduct*? But for the war, Lee would have lived and died unknown to the world, but great soldier that he was, the future will remember the man rather than the soldier. Indeed, before Lee's death, a professor of Greek, George Long, had indicated what was to be his place in history, when he sent Lee his translation of the *Thoughts of Marcus Aurelius*, with a prefatory note declaring him worthy because of his talents and virtues, to occupy a place "by the side of the best and wisest man who sat on the throne of the imperial Cæsars." The comparison was no bit of idle rhetoric. In all the pages of history there is no character that Lee resembles more. Both were soldiers all their lives, though the Roman emperor's campaigns against the Quadi and Marcomanni are not glorious in the annals of the Empire; both were possessed all through their lives by the thought of God; the careers of both were tragedies, for both

were driven by ineluctable necessity to fight a hopeless battle against the future ; and yet the lives of both are among the great triumphs of humanity. Both were loved by their people with an ardent devotion. The historian tells us that the Empire mourned for Marcus as for a father, and that a hundred years after his death his bust was found in nearly every home, honored with those of the family ancestors. And can there be found anywhere in the "Meditations" a nobler watchword than Lee's "You will do your duty. That is all the pleasure, all the comfort, all the glory we can enjoy in this world?"

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